Wilmesmeier, Jean
227 Sheridan, WY

April 8, 1988

Her father, Bert Gross, came to Sheridan about 1915. He emigrated from Lithuania and landed in Houston [Galveston?]. He went to Chicago to work in a hide house. He then went to Butte, where he had relatives, by name of Gordon, sister was Fannie Gordon. His brother Ben was already in Sheridan when he arrived.

Father in salvage & hide & fur business. They had men who would go around the area, Buffalo to Montana, to buy hides, furs, scrap metals & batteries. They shipped these materials back to Chicago. At first, they worked 7 days a week, 14 to 18 hours a day. Ben later went to Chicago, about 1918.

Bert Gross came from a large family of 12 children. His father was a rabbi. A brother also immigrated to the US. He got a doctorate at the University of Chicago, but was a shoe salesman. His name is Morris & lives in Long Beach, CA. A sister also immigrated, Fannie Gordon.

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There was no formal Jewish life here. The only families she knows about are Lipmans & Thielmans. Jewish holidays were not celebrated within the family. She believes he was sort of turned off to Judaism because of his father's desire for the boys to be rabbis.

Jean was born in 1927. She majored in business education at University of Colorado. She moved back to Sheridan in 1953 & has worked as a legal secretary, business manager at Sheridan College, & taught 20 years at Sheridan High School. Her mother, Eva, is 97 years old. She is Scotch-Irish. She was a secretary in a bank when she met Bert. Eva helped do office work for Bert for 10 years. She worked as a secretary to the president of Sheridan Nat'l Bank & helped Bert get loans.

Bert was civic-minded. Gave lots of money anonymously to charities. Jean said he practiced the generosity of his religion. He was a member of Elks, Masons, Shriners & Rotary.

She has older brother (Lionel, Chicago) & ½ brother.